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ABSTRACT

This guide to public relations (PR) for school media specialists begins with a list of 10 "PR Commandments" and suggestions for ways to improve the media center's image, i.e., a media newsletter; renewal workshops; reference skills units; a student brochure; new faculty orientation; media messages; a happenings board; displays, centers, and bulletin boards; and guest celebrities. Suggestions for ways to reach out to faculty, administration, students, and the community are then outlined. Techniques for effective communication are also provided, including guidelines for producing semester reports; developing media program goals and objectives; and designing displays, learning centers, and bulletin boards. Hints for preparing a media newsletter and a list of sources for additional information on public relations in library/media centers conclude the guide. (EW)

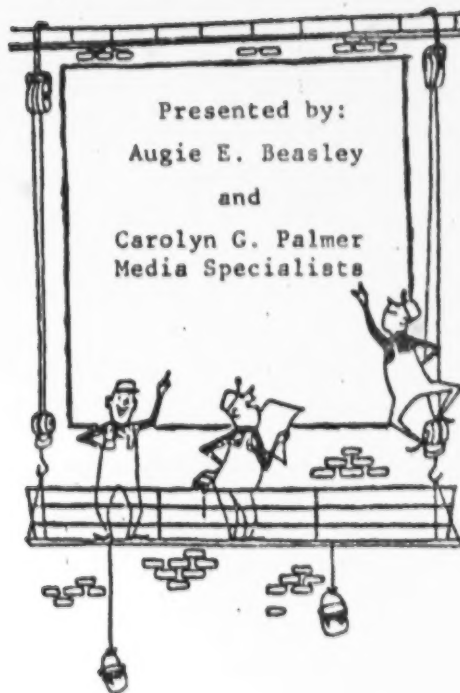
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PRACTICAL PR FOR SCHOOL MEDIA CENTERS



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Charlotte-Mecklenburg School System

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PR COMMANDMENTS

1. Thou shalt smile and be enthusiastic.
A pleasing personality and willingness to do a little extra will do wonders for your program.
2. Thou shalt create an attractive and inviting center.
Develop learning centers, bulletin boards, and displays which appeal to users of the center.
3. Thou shalt keep thine principal informed of media activities, policies, services, and needs.
4. Thou shalt plan with teachers.
Volunteer thine services. Be aware of their needs and interests.
5. Thou shalt offer new students and teachers special help.
6. Thou shalt maintain high visibility.
Get out of thine office. Visit classrooms. Attend extra-curricula activities.
7. Thou shalt be friendly to custodians and secretaries.
8. Thou shalt publicize new media, new equipment, and new services to students and staff.
9. Thou shalt not make changes too quickly thine first year in a new position.
10. Thou shalt always reach out with media.

PR--IMPROVING OUR IMAGE

Realizing the importance of the image of the school library media center to the success or failure of the media program, the media staff at East Mecklenburg plans public relations as it does every other aspect of the media program. Quality service, high visibility of the media staff, and continual assessment of student/faculty needs are definitely important factors in determining how others perceive the media program and the media staff.

The following are some of the ways which the East Media Staff uses for improving the media image:

MEDIA NEWSLETTER---Publish a monthly newsletter which:

- * Highlights cultural events in the community, on TV, or on educational radio/TV
- * Recognizes achievements and honors of the faculty
- * Spotlights new media and underlines with a felt pen titles of special interest to individual teachers
- * Announces the purchase of new equipment
- * Provides AV hints
- * Uses clip art, good graphics, and effective layout of information for "attention getters"

RENEWAL WORKSHOPS---Teach a yearly workshop which offers renewal credit to faculty participants. Considerations in designing the workshop include:

- * Securing the support of the principal and system level personnel
- * Surveying the faculty to determine interest
- * Seeking certificate renewal information and approval from system personnel services
- * Planning and developing objectives and performance indicators
- * Outlining material to be presented
- * Organizing and listing equipment and materials to be used
- * Designing evaluation instrument
- * Publicizing workshop dates for interested faculty

REFERENCE SKILLS UNITS---Develop reference skills units which apply to our center and resources. The plan includes:

- * Designing a pre/post test on media skills
- * Developing a study guide and questions/activities for the various types of reference tools
- * Preparing visuals to accompany the study guides and activities and aid in presenting material to the students
- * Showing these to faculty and offering to teach or team-teach the unit with their classes

STUDENT BROCHURE---Develop a brochure (one 8½ by 11 sheet folded to make four pages) which summarizes:

- * Available services (Ex. Videotaping, laminating, etc.)
- * Special features (Ex. Television studio, Computers, Darkroom, Security system, etc.)
- * General information (Ex. Hours, circulation, fines, etc.)

NEW FACULTY ORIENTATION--Provide a Media Mixer for new staff members during beginning workdays. Mixer includes:

- * Goodies
- * Informal introduction to media staff and center
- * MEDIA SURVIVAL PACKET (packet of materials including media forms, hints on use, available services, etc.)

MEDIA MESSAGES--Provide a concise sheet of information to parents and community about the media program on Parents' Night in the spring

HAPPENINGS BOARD--Prepare a board highlighting achievements of students in academics and sports, announcing events of interest, and informing students of special programs on television, etc.

DISPLAYS, CENTERS, AND BULLETIN BOARDS--Plan and develop displays, centers, etc. which add to the attractiveness of the center, as well as provide learning experiences.

GUEST CELEBRITIES--Invite local celebrities to visit the media center and talk with students. Videotape the sessions with their prior premission.

REACHING OUT WITH MEDIA TO . . .

FACULTY

- Present a positive attitude when faculty members request help/information.

Don't promise more than you can deliver but--don't always have an excuse for not being able to meet requests.

Help faculty with their projects.

Welcome their suggestions of new procedures as well as new materials.

Don't always be on the defensive.

Be flexible in scheduling. Bend the rules once in a while.

Gladly compile and duplicate bibliographies for units being taught. Publicize this service. (Many faculty members do not realize this is a service that they should expect.)

- * Keep faculty informed of new materials and services.

Try a newsletter, personal notes, etc.

Know their interests and hobbies. Let them know when materials arrive which would be of interest in these areas.

- * Encourage each department to meet in the media center at least once each year.

Have new and old materials available for browsing.

Attend departmental meetings to assess needs. (Each department once or twice a year)

- * Involve the faculty in selection and weeding. Make sure the Media Advisory Committee is active and that faculty members are aware of the members.

- * Conduct inservice for the faculty. (renewal workshops, informal instruction in the use of lettering tools, new equipment, etc., software exhibits, and software exhibits on workdays)

- * Develop activities and show faculty members what you

can do to help them with units.

- * Assist them with bulletin boards, displays, and learning centers.

Provide lettering tools which will make the job easier.

Keep a clip art file.

Have poster board, construction paper, etc. available in the work area.

- * Be involved. Be indispensable. Be the place that they go first for everything. Make it hard not to use the media center.

ADMINISTRATION

- * Make sure they know you are alive.

Give them a tour of the facility.

Invite them to special activities.

Keep them informed of inservice activities you have.

- * Make sure they know what you do.

Provide semester reports.

Develop goals and objectives for the media program.

Provide them with short, interesting descriptions of professional meetings that you attend.

Tell them about professional activities, honors, etc.

Brag about your program.

- * Be known outside your local school.

Get involved in district, regional, state, and national professional activities.

Invite others to visit your center. Always have your principal's approval.

Visit other centers.

- * Be positive when you talk with the administrators.

Visit the principal to tell of good news not just

problems

- * Take time to write a thank you note to administrators who support your program in a special way.
- * Keep accurate records
- * Assist administrators in locating materials for hobbies and interests, course work, upcoming speeches or presentations, etc.

Offer to prepare visuals.

STUDENTS

- * Keep students aware of media services and materials.
Develop student brochures which outline services and policies.
Submit articles to the school newspaper.
Present orientation sessions for new students which highlight positive aspects of the media center and its services. (Play down the emphasis on rules or don'ts.)
- * Present a positive attitude when students need information.
SMILE!
Offer assistance and ideas for special class projects. (Suggest lettering alternatives for posters, provide a box of old magazines for cutting, provide markers, colored pencils, etc. for check out, and offer to call the public library or agencies for additional materials for projects.)
Invite students to make suggestions for materials to be purchased.
Have a student or students on the Media Advisory Committee.
- * Be the place that they go first for everything.
Provide markers, scissors, crayons, rulers, stencil letters, etc. for check out.
Have poster board, construction paper, etc. for purchase.
Offer binding services for reports and papers.
Provide computer disks for temporary saving of programs.
Supply old newspapers and magazines for cutting pictures and current for reports.
Keep a clip art file.
- * Promote student activities and projects.
Have a Happenings Board which displays newspaper articles of student activities.
Exhibit student projects.

Support club activities.

Let students meet in the media center for school activities and clubs.

- * Show interest in student hobbies and interests.

Provide chess sets for check out during lunch.

Notify students when new materials arrive on topics which would interest them.

Attend sports events.

- * Be visible outside the media center.

Participate in school projects--drama, sports, faculty-student events.

Visit the classroom to teach skills, give booktalks, etc.

- * Plan skills activities which are interesting and informative.

Present demonstrations on transparency making, slide making, videotaping, etc.

Have media scavenger hunts or media quiz bowls.

Allow students to work in small groups on certain activities.

Develop skills activities around materials that students will be using in their classes. (Media/curriculum planning will make this possible.)

Introduce computer programs, equipment, etc. which students can use to create projects. (Print Shop, Crossword Magic, word processing programs, opaque projector, Ellison letter cutting machine, etc.)

- * Tune students in not out. Learn to LISTEN!

COMMUNITY

- * Recruit volunteers for media activities.

Utilize special talents.

Plan a mixer to acquaint volunteers with the media center and services.

Plan special ways to show them that they are appreciated.

- * Be involved.

Join the PTA.

Plan workshops for parents during American Education Week.

Participate in school open houses for parents and community.

- * Organize a community resource file.

Invite local authors, public figures, newspeople, etc. to visit the media center and speak with students.

Cooperate with faculty in planning for speakers. Offer videotaping services.

- * Cooperate with the public library.

- * Keep important community members aware of your program.

Some people to keep informed--civic leaders, leaders of service organizations, cable and public television personnel, newspeople, lawyers, businessmen/women, politicians, and other local public figures.

- * Allow community groups to use the media center for meetings.

Adult evening classes.

Local college classes.

- * Remember if you want to reach the community you must speak up and speak out. Create innovative ways of spreading the media story.

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TECHNIQUES FOR EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

SEMESTER REPORTS

The media specialist should prepare a report each semester which describes the activities of the media program and gives statistics showing media center use. The following ideas may be helpful in preparing semester reports:

PREPARATION:

1. Keep a list of all activities during the semester. Include comments which will serve as reminders for explaining the activity later.
2. Keep statistics which show amount of media center use. (Circulation, number of reserves, number of classes/students, etc.)
3. Keep notes on professional activities in which the staff participates.
4. Keep records of all new equipment purchased and gifts received from clubs, organizations, etc.
5. Keep a list of learning centers and displays which were developed as well as a list of bibliographies prepared for classes.
6. Keep a list of any faculty inservice which the media center provided.

WRITING THE REPORT:

1. Introduce the report with an interesting activity or attention getting statement about the semester's activities.

Avoid opening statements like: The media staff circulated 8,000 books this semester. or The media staff served 500 classes this semester. Use these statistics later in the report.

2. Develop the report using four or five explanations of successful activities which show the quality and type of service given. Student as well as teacher centered activities should be included.

Example: Renewal workshops for teachers--
Computer instruction for students--
Students teleconference with author--
-Software exhibits for teachers.

3. Provide statistics which will show the amount of use of the center.

Example: Number of classes served or number of students--Circulation statistics-- Reserves/bibliographies provided--Skills taught.

4. Describe interesting learning centers or displays which were provided.

Example: In an effort to increase computer literacy, the staff designed a learning center, "Puttin' on the Byte," to familiarize students with computer terminology. The center proved to be one of the most successful centers that the staff has developed.

5. Show ways in which clubs (PTSA, Student Congress, etc.) supported the media program.

Example: Students in clubs volunteered time after school for shelving and general upkeep activities in the media center. PTSA purchased computer software.

6. Explain staff involvement in professional activities.
7. Conclude with an overall statement about semester's activities, and provide a glimpse of what activities are scheduled for the next semester or school year.

Example: The media staff has enjoyed the first semester's activities and is ready for an exciting and busy second semester. The staff has planned a series of mini workshops in media for the staff and will be busy looking for other ways to improve services to faculty and students . . . and Second semester always promises RESEARCH PAPERS!

DISTRIBUTING THE REPORT:

Copies of the semester report should be distributed to your principal and assistant principals, system level media and technology director and media program specialist, and area superintendent. Others to whom you

may choose to send copies of the report could include:

1. Regional media coordinator
2. PTSA president
3. Members of the Media Advisory Committee

MEDIA PROGRAM GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Each year the media specialist should develop media program goals and objectives which are given the principal and assistant principal/s at the beginning of the school year. Long range goals as well as short term goals should be developed. These may be distributed to others, but remember to always respect the chain of command. Be sure to find out if your principal prefers to receive the copies and then distribute as he/she wishes or if he/she prefers that you distribute the copies. This rule applies to all communiques. Consider the following ideas when you begin developing media goals:

1. Develop one or more goals or objectives in the different areas of the media program.

Suggested areas:

- 1-Media skills instruction
- 2-Production (student and teacher)
- 3-Public relations
- 4-Organization and access of materials
- 5-Atmosphere
- 6-Professional activities
- 7-Curriculum planning
- 8-Extra-curricular activities

2. Develop short and long term goals for the media program.

Example: Short Term (goal for that school year)--Plan with teachers in developing activities which will provide opportunities for students to gain skills for independent research.

Long Term (goal that may need several years to reach)--Implement computer applications for library/media center management.

3. Include specific indicators for each goal or objective.

Either specific activities which will be used to meet goals or specific methods which can be

used to evaluate progress/completion of goal.

4. Inform administration of goals.
5. Evaluate progress on a regular basis during the year.
6. Prepare an end-of-the-year evaluation of the goals/objectives.

Include: Success of goals reached--Activities used to reach goals--Explanation of why specific goals were not completed--Future strategy for accomplishing long range goals.

DISPLAYS/CENTERS/BULLETIN BOARDS

The following are general ideas for designing displays, learning center, and bulletin boards.

1. Add texture to displays.
2. Use commercial lettering or professional lettering devices--Hand lettering is usually not as effective.

TRY: Alphaline
Wrico
Leroy
Kroy (headliner)
Opaque enlargements of letter styles
Computer graphics like the PRINT SHOP

3. Use catchy slogans or make use of popular sayings. (Where's the Book? Puttin' on the Byte, Programmed for a Good Year)
4. Use different approaches--3-D objects, hanging objects, various layouts, shapes, and spatial relationships. (Rather than the three-sided vertical fold for centers, try a carrel type center, the screen technique or the pyramid.)
5. Change displays regularly.
6. Keep an idea file and/or caption file.
7. Save parts which can be used again.
8. Take photos of displays, centers, etc.
9. Develop topics of current interest. (EX. Computers, elections, etc.)

10. Make use of clip art. Remember line drawings can be enlarged using the opaque projector for use on bulletin boards.

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MAKING IT WITH MEDIA: HINTS FOR PREPARING A MEDIA NEWSLETTER

The media staff at East Mecklenburg is always seeking ways to improve communications with the faculty and administration. One of the most effective methods which we have tried is MAKING IT WITH MEDIA, our media newsletter.

MAKING IT WITH MEDIA began as a concise, one-page newsletter but has expanded to a four-page, monthly publication. The staff tries to avoid the "chatty, look-what-we're-doing" newsletter. Our goal has been to keep the faculty informed of new materials and services, as well as to remind them of materials and services which they may have forgotten.

During the month we keep a file of ideas for articles, coming events, educational television and radio highlights, and cartoons/fillers to keep the tone light. During the past few years we have included the following:

- * Audiovisual do's and don'ts
- * Monthly ETV/Radio highlights
- * Reminders of available services/equipment/materials (September and January issues)
- * Special lists of materials on current topics (i.e. child abuse, alcohol, anorexia)
- * Tips for effective media center use
- * Announcements of new equipment
- * Monthly lists of new materials
- * YA literature
- * Special holiday lists of gift-giving books
- * Favorite recipes
- * Cartoons, jokes, sayings
- * Quizzes on computers, copyright, etc.
- * Crossword puzzles and word games
- * HATS OFF to faculty members on recent achievements
- * DATELINE--Special events from history, etc. which are remembered during the month (i.e. Fire Prevention Week, Martin Luther King's birthday, Valentine's Day, etc.)

We have several hints which we offer on preparing a media newsletter:

- * Keep the layout simple and clean
- * Use clip art, lots of graphics, and colored paper for "attention getters"
- * Keep a folder of items and ideas for articles
- * Cut down on verbiage
- * Spotlight new media and underline with a felt pen titles of special interest to individual teachers
- * Use the offset press to cut cost of printing (Consider using school's graphics department as the printer)
- * Mail copies to central school administrators, board members, other schools, public libraries

The newsletter has proven to be an effective method for drawing attention to the media center's activities and services, as well as an effective way of reminding the staff that the media specialists want to meet their needs and to assist them in the instructional process.

PUBLIC RELATIONS IN LIBRARY/MEDIA CENTERS
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- Baker, D. Phillip. "School and Public Library Programs and Information Dissemination," SCHOOL MEDIA QUARTERLY, Winter 1977, pp. 119-127.
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- Blank, Patricia. "How Media Specialists Promote Their Services," MEDIA & METHODS, January 1981, pp. 37-38.
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LIBRARY PR NEWS, P.O. Box 687, Bloomfield, New Jersey 07003. \$17.00
A bimonthly newsletter

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Charleston, West Virginia 25311. \$14.00
A quarterly newsletter

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SCHOOL LIBRARY MEDIA QUARTERLY 10 (Fall, 1982) pp. 43-44 and 52-57.

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Bloomfield, NJ 07003

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FOR SCHOOL MEDIA CENTERS. Idaho Falls, Idaho: Hi Willow Research and Pub.
(Box 2243, Idaho Falls, Idaho 83401) \$2.50

Ross Book Service, Box 12093, Seminary P.O., Alexandria, VA 22304-0993.
(Order catalog of books to help do newsletters, mailers, brochures \$1.50)

Upstart Library Promotionals, Box 889, Hagerstown, Maryland 21740